



The "Preferred" Alternative

What does "Preferred" and "Environmentally Preferred" mean?

Given a set of management alternatives—ways of treating and managing resources in the future—the "Preferred Alternative" is the alternative that best meets all National, State and Local laws regarding natural and cultural resource preservation and is economically feasible.

The "Environmentally Preferred" management alternative—which can sometimes differ from the “preferred”—is identified at the end of an impact analysis. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (Sec.101(b)) requires that a set of criteria be fulfilled:

- 1) Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations.**
- 2) Ensure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.**
- 3) Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences.**
- 4) Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice.**
- 5) Achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities.**
- 6) Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.**

Simply put, "this means the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative which best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources" (CEQ NEPA's 40 Most Asked Questions).